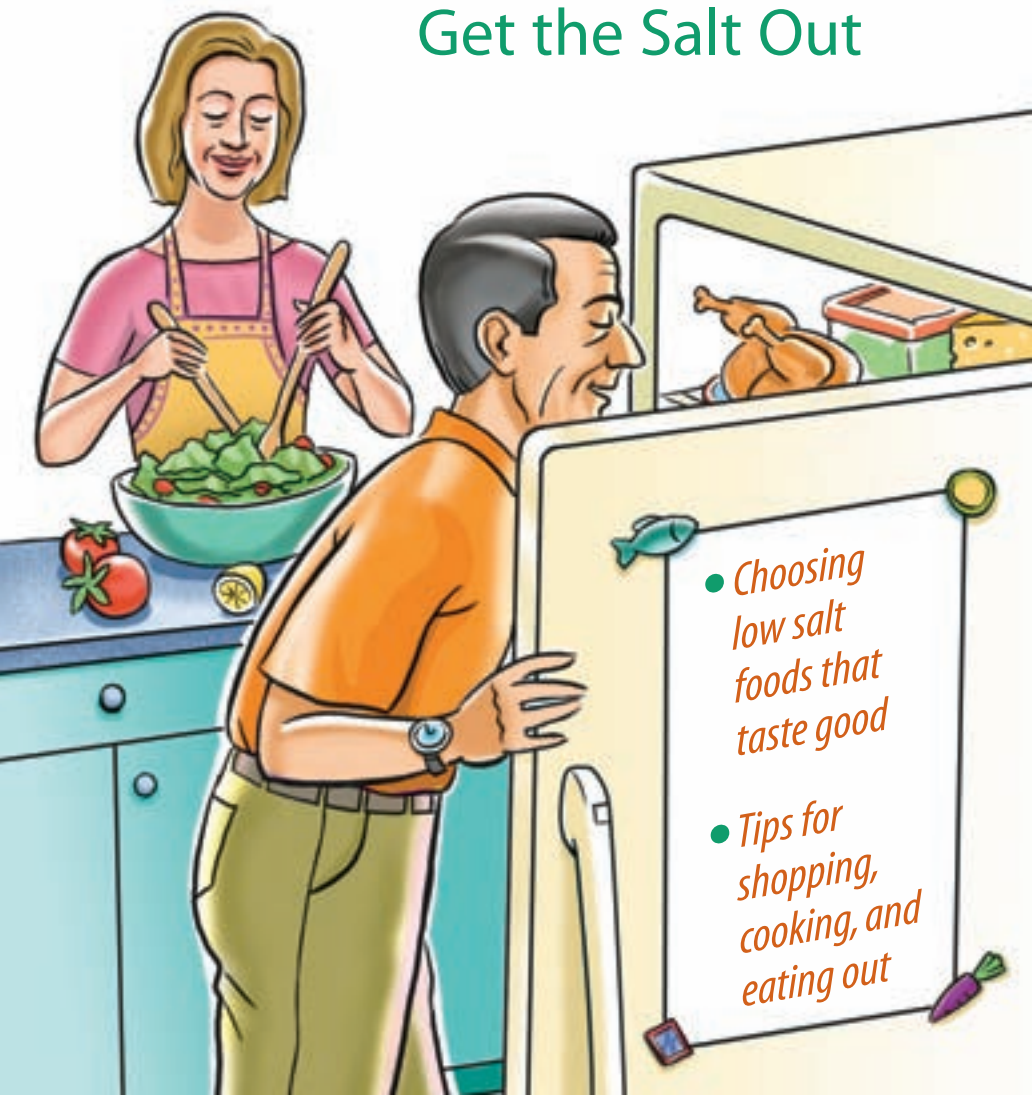


Avoiding Hidden Sodium

Get the Salt Out



What Is Sodium?

You've been told to limit sodium. How do you start? Do you know what it is, where to find it? Sodium is a mineral that's common in many foods. You know it as salt. Your taste buds tell you that certain foods are salty. But sodium also hides in foods that don't tickle your tongue, such as canned corn and hot dogs. This booklet can help you find and avoid these hidden sources of sodium.

What You Can't See CAN Hurt You

Sodium can pop up at any meal. It's in frozen waffles at breakfast, fast-food hamburgers at lunch, and canned beans at dinner. Here are a few places you can find hidden sodium:

- **Canned, processed, and frozen foods**, like soups, lunch meat, frozen pizza, and vegetable juice.
- **Mixes**, like gravy mix and instant mashed potatoes.
- **Pickled, cured, and smoked foods**, like relishes, bacon, and sausage.
- **Salty stuff**, like chips and popcorn, not to mention table salt!
- **Fast food**, like a burrito or a cheeseburger, or even a chicken sandwich.
- **Things that fizz in water**, like some over-the-counter medicines.



This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.

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Why Eat Less Sodium?

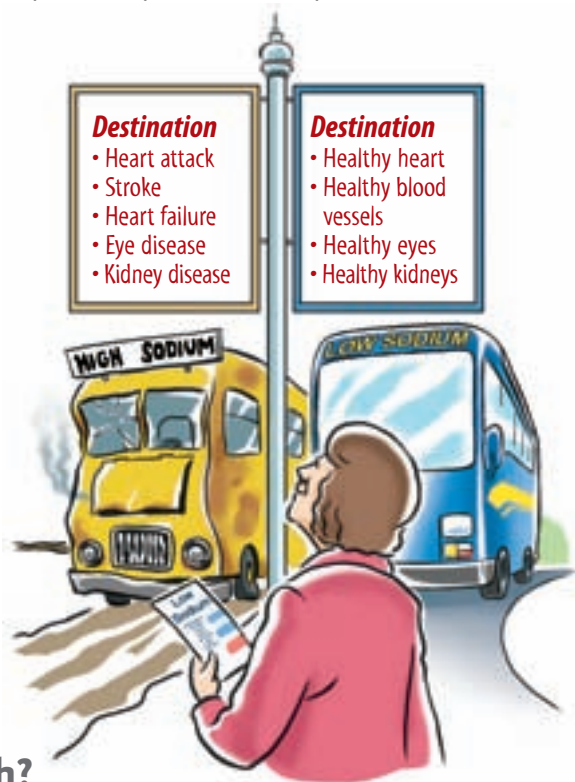
Your body does need some sodium. But too much makes some health problems, especially high blood pressure and heart failure, get worse. Even if you're on medications for these problems, cutting back on salt will help you be healthier and feel even better. Adjusting to the change in taste takes time. But you really can retrain your taste buds.

Reasons to Limit Sodium

- **High blood pressure.**

Eating too much sodium can raise blood pressure. High blood pressure causes or worsens many health problems, including coronary heart disease, stroke, eye disease, and kidney disease.

- **Heart failure.** Too much sodium makes you retain water. The more fluid in your system, the harder the heart has to work to pump blood to the rest of the body.



How Much Is Enough?

Most people are told to eat less than 2,300mg of sodium a day. (That's under 1 teaspoon of table salt!) People with certain health conditions may need to eat even less. Ask your doctor what's best for you. And don't forget, a lot of sodium is hidden in fast food and packaged products. So you probably shouldn't add any salt to your food.



You Can Start Today

To limit sodium, you need to know how much you *should* eat, and how much you eat now. Then you can learn how to replace high sodium foods with healthier choices. Take it a step at a time. But make the effort to begin today.

Set Your Limit

Work with your healthcare provider to set a daily sodium goal:

- Less than _____ mg per day.

Know What You're Eating

Find out how much is in the foods you eat. Learn to:

- Understand food labels (page 5).
- Find out which foods are high in sodium (page 8).
- Track your daily sodium intake (page 15).

Eat Fewer High Sodium Foods

To help you succeed, learn how to:

- Shop wisely (page 6).
- Replace high sodium foods with lower sodium options (page 10).
- Cook with less salt (page 11).
- Eat well without sacrificing your social life (page 12).
- Stay on track (page 13).



What Can Packaging Tell Me?

Food labels tell you how much sodium you're getting. Even the claims on the front of the box, like "low sodium," have exact meanings. With a little practice, reading a label is easy. So get a box or package out of your cupboard. Read the label and see how it compares to this one.

Make sure to check the **serving size**. This is the basis for all values on the label. If you eat more than 2 cookies, you'll get more sodium than the amount listed here.

Sodium is given in milligrams (mg), a unit of weight. Remember your daily goal when choosing foods.

Nutrition Facts

Serving size 2 cookies (26g/0.9 oz)
Servings per container 6

Amount Per Serving

Calories 140 Calories from Fat 70

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 7g **11%**

Saturated Fat 2.5g **13%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 10mg **3%**

Sodium 105mg **4%**

Total Carbohydrates 16g **5%**

Dietary Fiber 1g **4%**

Sugars 5g

Protein 2g

Vitamin A 0% • **Vitamin C** 0%

Calcium 0% • **Iron** 2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Percent daily values give the percent of the standard recommended amount per day. So 1 serving of this food has about 4% of a 2,300mg daily sodium goal.

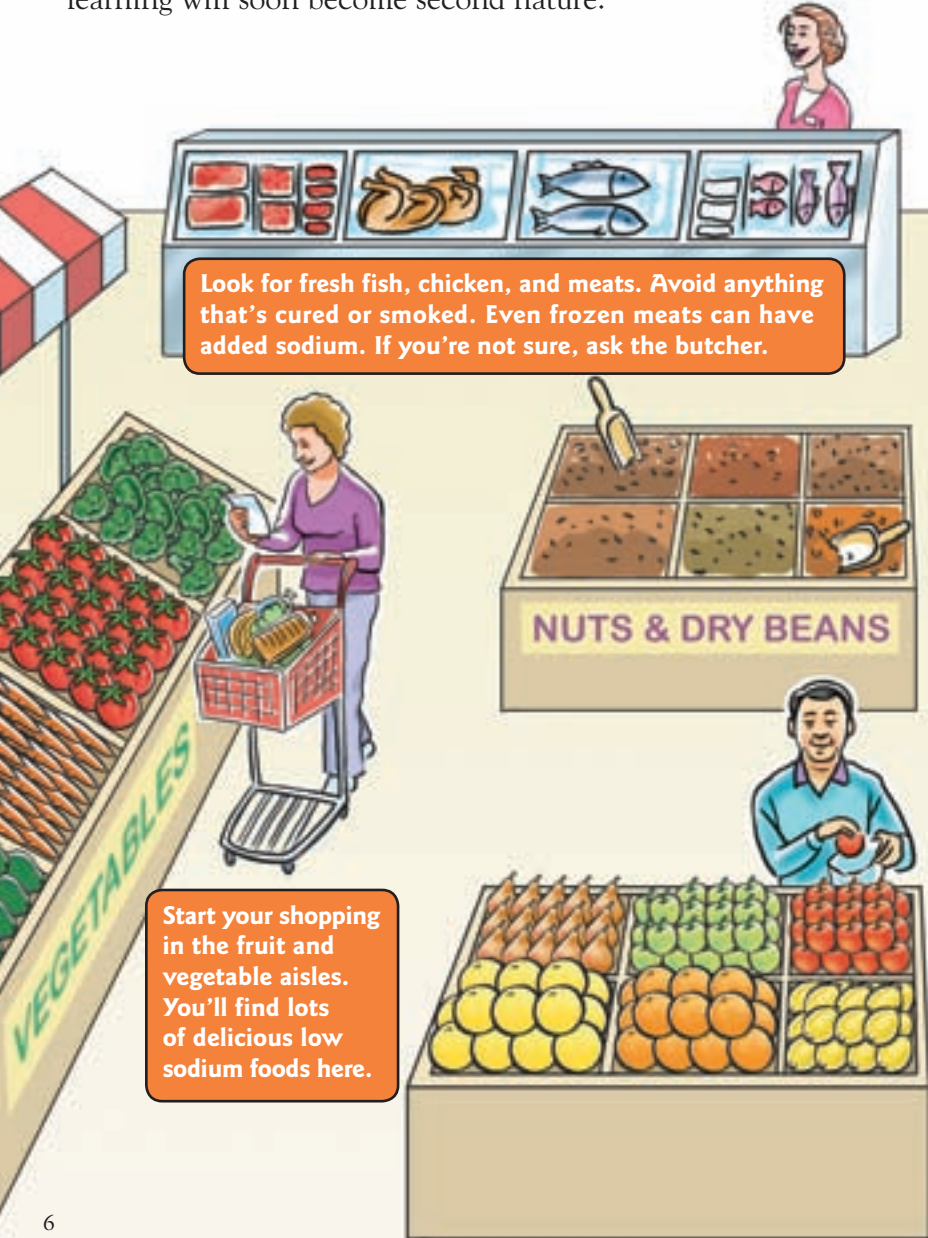
What's That Really Mean?

Claims on product packages can be confusing. By law:

- **Sodium free** or **salt free** means less than 5mg per serving.
- **Very low sodium** means 35mg or less per serving.
- **Low sodium** means 140mg or less per serving.
- **Reduced sodium** or **less sodium** means at least 25% less sodium than the standard version. (Check the label for exactly how much.)
- **Light in sodium** means 50% less sodium than the standard version. (Again, check the label for exactly how much.)
- **Unsalted** or **no salt added** means no salt is added to the product during processing. (You guessed it: Check the label.)
- **Healthy** and **natural** have no nutritional meaning.

Tips for Leaving Sodium at the Store

Most people shop by habit. Does this sound like you? If so, it's time to turn off the automatic pilot! Avoid impulse buys: Make a shopping list before you go to the store. But don't worry, the new habits you're learning will soon become second nature.



Look for fresh fish, chicken, and meats. Avoid anything that's cured or smoked. Even frozen meats can have added sodium. If you're not sure, ask the butcher.

Start your shopping in the fruit and vegetable aisles. You'll find lots of delicious low sodium foods here.

Frozen dinners can be high in sodium. Also, look for plain frozen foods without sauces.



The snack food section is also the sodium section. Read the labels with care. Look for low salt versions of your favorite snack.



Processed foods are often high in sodium. Always check the label, keeping your daily goal in mind.



Hidden Sodium: Seek It Out

Knowing how much sodium is in a product helps you decide whether to buy it. Use this chart to help you shop and plan meals. Sodium can vary by brand, so always check the label, too. This chart lists lower sodium choices in each group first.

	Foods	Sodium
Nuts and Beans	Beans, dried, prepared without salt (1/2 cup)	less than 2mg
	Peanut butter, unsalted (2 tablespoons)	10mg
	Beans, canned, no salt added (1/2 cup)	15mg
	Peanut butter, salted (2 tablespoons)	150mg
	Beans, pinto, canned (1/2 cup)	350mg
	Beans, refried, canned (1/2 cup)	380mg
Dairy	Cheese, parmesan, grated (1 tablespoon)	95mg
	Yogurt, plain or flavored (1 cup)	100–150mg
	Cheese, cheddar (1 oz)	175mg
Fruit and Vegetables	Corn, frozen, prepared (1/2 cup)	less than 5mg
	Tomato, fresh (1)	10mg
	Tomatoes, canned, unsalted (1/2 cup)	30mg
	Peas, green, frozen, prepared (1/2 cup)	70mg
	Juice, vegetable, low sodium (1 cup)	140mg
	Tomatoes, canned (1/2 cup)	180mg
Convenience Food	Juice, vegetable, regular (1 cup)	620mg
	Pizza, cheese, frozen (4 oz)	400–1,000mg
	Macaroni and cheese, prepared (1 cup)	730mg
	Rice dish mix, prepared (1 cup)	800–1,400mg
	Pea soup mix, dry, prepared (3/4 cup)	915mg
	Split pea soup, canned, prepared (1 cup)	1,000mg
	Hamburger, fast food	475–1,000mg
	Ramen noodle soup (1 package)	830–1,300mg








	Foods	Sodium
Grain Products	Rice, white or brown, cooked (1 cup)	less than 20mg
	Pasta (2 oz uncooked)	less than 20mg
	Tortilla, corn (1 medium)	40mg
	Bread, whole-wheat (1 slice)	120–140mg
	Rice noodles (2 oz uncooked)	130mg
	Bread, white (1 slice)	120–250mg
	Tortilla, flour (1 medium)	210mg
	Bread, rye (1 slice)	215mg
Meat and Fish	Egg, boiled (1)	60mg
	Cod, baked (3.5 oz)	75mg
	Hamburger patty, broiled (3.5 oz)	75mg
	Chicken, roasted (3.5 oz)	80mg
	Sardines, canned (2 medium)	120mg
	Chicken, batter-fried (3.5 oz)	290mg
	Bacon (2 slices)	290mg
	Tuna, light, canned (3 oz)	300mg
	Hot dog (1)	460mg
	Ham (3.5 oz)	950–1,500mg
Snacks	Nuts, mixed, unsalted (1 oz)	0mg
	Popcorn, popped, unsalted (1 cup)	40–65mg
	Ice cream, vanilla (½ cup)	55mg
	Cookie, chocolate chip (1)	55mg
	Cookie, peanut butter (1)	100mg
	Tortilla chips (1 oz, about 10 chips)	150mg
	Potato chips (1 oz, about 10 chips)	170mg
	Nuts, mixed, salted (1 oz)	250mg
	Pretzels, salted (1 oz)	485mg

■ Indicates foods with more than 140mg of sodium per serving.

Note: Numbers are rounded to nearest 5mg.

What Can You Choose Instead?

There are lots of foods that can give you the taste or the texture you crave—without overloading you with sodium! Here are a few switches you can make. Try making one change per day. Work up to making one change per meal. Of course, what you choose depends on your taste. Can you think of more alternatives for the foods you often eat?

	If You Often Eat:	Try Instead:	
Breakfast	• Packaged breakfast pastries or frozen waffles	• Toasted raisin bread	
	• Salted butter	• Jam or unsalted butter	
	• Flavored oatmeal, grits, or other cooked cereal	• Plain cooked cereal (seasoned yourself)	
	• Vegetable juice	• Fruit juice or low sodium vegetable juice	
	• Frozen hash browns	• Fresh hash browns, or a low sodium frozen brand	
Lunch	• Pickles	• Raw fresh vegetables	
	• Lunch meat or salami	• Plain sliced turkey, chicken, or beef	
	• Noodle soup with flavor packet	• Plain noodles (seasoned yourself)	
	• Processed cheese (American)	• Natural cheese (cheddar, Swiss, etc.)	
	• Chips or fries	• Unsalted pretzels, nuts, or chips	
	• Candy bar with nuts or caramel	• Plain chocolate bar	

If You Often Eat:

Try Instead:

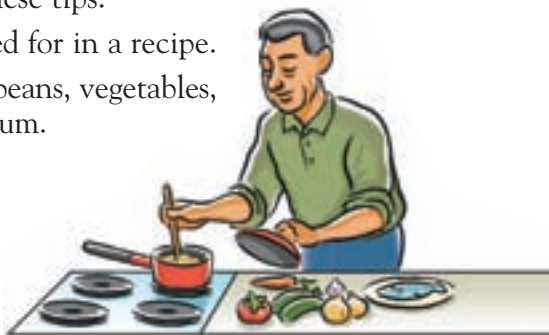
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|--|---|
| • Table salt (for cooking) | • Lemon, garlic, spices, low sodium spice mixes |
| • Soy sauce | • Low sodium soy sauce |
| • Bottled salad dressing | • Oil, vinegar, and herbs |
| • Rice dish mix | • Plain rice (seasoned yourself) |
| • Canned vegetables or beans | • Frozen, fresh, or low sodium canned vegetables or beans |
| • Frozen potatoes or instant mashed potatoes | • Boiled or baked potatoes |
| • Ham | • Roast pork |
| • Smoked turkey | • Roast turkey or chicken |
| • Sausage | • Hamburger patty |



Low Sodium Cooking

To cut even more sodium, try these tips:

- Use half the salt (or less) called for in a recipe.
- Rinse packaged meat, canned beans, vegetables, and tuna to remove some sodium.
- Don't salt cooking water.
- Use fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of packaged seasoning mixes.
- Keep the saltshaker off the table and the stove.
- For baking, try sodium free baking powder.



What About Eating Out?

Eating out used to be for special occasions. Not any more! These days, many of our meals are eaten at restaurants. It's convenient, especially if you don't cook. But it's also a good way to load up on sodium. So you'll need a few tricks for dodging sodium when you're eating out.

Eating Out

Don't give up going out! Keep sources of hidden sodium in mind (page 2). Think before you order. Pickled, cured and smoked foods are still good foods to avoid. Also:

- Ask for food to be prepared with less salt or soy sauce, and no MSG.
- Avoid breaded foods.
- Ask for salads without bacon or pickled vegetables. Choose oil and vinegar as a dressing.
- Limit condiments such as relish, ketchup, mustard, and soy sauce.
- Don't salt your food. If it needs seasoning, ask the server for half a lemon. And use the pepper!
- Ask if vegetables are canned. If so, order a fresh salad. At a salad bar, choose raw vegetables over cooked or canned.



Parties and Holidays

Lots of people watch what they eat—it won't set you apart. Try these tips:

- Sit or stand away from a buffet or where snacks have been placed.
- Bring a favorite low sodium dish to a potluck. Just take tastes of other foods.
- At traditional holiday meals, watch your portion sizes—and have fun!

Staying On Track

Once you've made changes in your eating habits, how do you stick with them? It can be easy to fall back into old patterns. But by thinking positive and getting some help, you can do it. Here are a few tips for staying on track.

Making Changes Stick

- **Get support.** This is key. Explain to friends and family why you need to limit sodium. (It doesn't hurt to remind yourself, too!)
- **Make changes fit your lifestyle.** Otherwise, they probably won't stick. So if you can't live without pickles, just have them once in a while.
- **Set realistic goals.** Which steps will you want to take first? Write down how you will begin to reduce sodium. Inspire yourself by keeping track of your progress.
- **Aim for a lifetime of mostly good choices.** One salty slip doesn't matter. What does matter is finding ways to eat better most of the time.
- **Reward yourself for sticking with it.** What do you consider a treat—a ball game, a movie, a manicure? When you know you've earned a treat, you'll enjoy it all the more.



Smart Snacking

Try snacking on:

- A piece of fruit and some unsalted nuts
- Cherry tomatoes (or any raw vegetable you like) and low sodium cheese
- A bowl of cereal (check the sodium content first!)

What Goes into a Healthy Diet?

There's more to eating well than cutting sodium. Each of the food groups listed here can benefit your health. And, in fresh or plain frozen form, they're low in sodium. It's a good idea to fill up on these foods. Then there's less room for foods that aren't so good for you.

The Food Groups

- **Fruits and vegetables** are sources of fiber and vitamins. These foods are a great basis for any meal.
- **Whole grains and grain products** are rich in fiber and nutrients. Unrefined foods like whole-wheat bread and brown rice are your best bet.
- **Unsalted nuts, seeds, and dry beans** can provide you with protein, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and “good” fats.
- **Dairy products** are great sources of calcium and protein. You may want to look for low fat or fat free dairy products.
- **Poultry, fish, eggs, and lean meats** are full of protein, iron, and other minerals.



How much is too much?

Look for physical signs that you're eating too much sodium. If you have swelling, you gain weight, or your blood pressure rises, that means to cut back. Check with your doctor if you have these symptoms.

What’s on the Menu Today?

Make copies of this menu to keep track of the sodium you eat in a day. This can help you find ways to keep sodium in check. If the sodium total is higher than your upper limit, find the high numbers. What can you switch or cut?

Meals	Sodium (mg)
Breakfast	
Lunch	
Dinner	
Snacks	
Total	

Feeling Good

Reducing the amount of sodium you eat can help improve your health. It can also help you feel better. And that's what it's all about, isn't it?

My Sodium Goals

Less than _____ mg per day

Try for _____ mg per meal



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